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SLASH

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big-league muscle to open doors otherwise closed to Slash's slightly unorthodox music. Clearly, Slash is one punk ready to calm down and play ball—and a lot of other punks must feel the same way because the label is bombarded with tapes from bands eager to be signed.

The job of listening to all those tapes falls to Slash A&R person Anna Statman, who also monitors the local club scene for the company. A spunky blonde who wears her nonconformist credentials proudly, Statman believes that music is in sorry shape at the moment.

"The clubs are dead, glam rock is the only thing happening in L.A. and music is going underground again," she said. "I mean, the most added new record on the charts this week is Dan Fogelberg! What year is this anyway?!"

Samiof agrees with Statman.

"I don't think music's in very good shape right now. There's nothing new or shocking happening and there is no L.A. scene. The fact that the police kept closing down all the interesting clubs has a lot to do with that.

"Still, the spirit of punk—which is basically the refusal to live by the rules—always exists in a culture. It's just that sometimes it's harder to spot. At the moment I see a punk spirit in skateboarders—and there are still punk musicians, too. The punk thing will never go away for good.

"I was a hippie before I was a punk and I found the end of the punk thing a lot less painful than the end of the hippie thing. The hippie movement was a group ideology based on the notion of people working together in harmony and when people stopped gathering together for love-ins the individual was left with nothing.

"Punk was about personal revolution rather than social revolution so it was possible to separate yourself from your peers and still feel like a punk. I still put on the occasional old punk tape and pogo around the house and it does the same thing for me now that it did in 1977. It makes me aware of the power of the individual."

And somehow—despite earnings, Grammy nominations and deals with the majors, Slash too continues to represent the power of the individual.

"Slash still has an underdog image," said Biggs, "and any loyalty people feel for the label can probably be attributed to that. In a business where huge sums of money are the norm, we started with $1 and parlayed it into a company that's going to be around for a while. And we did it our own way and continue to do it our way. Until all hell is ready to break loose in the culture again, that's the most constructive punk activity I can think of." □

BRUCE HORNSBY

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"Not only that, it features these sort of jazzy piano solos. I think it's the sound of the piano that sucks people in. What's a song like this doing in the Top 10—or in the Top 100 for that matter?"

Maybe people needed a respite from pop-rock or dance music. Or maybe it's the aging baby boomers and New Age-oriented yuppies making their presence felt on the pop charts.

Many figured he'd be a one-hit wonder, but his next single, "Mandolin Rain"—laid-back, poetic pop-rock—confounded just about everyone by making the Top 10. What's more, RCA re-released that first single, "Every Little Kiss," which has climbed to No. 18 on the Billboard magazine chart and seems headed for the Top 10.

"I gave up trying to figure all this out," Hornsby said. "Me selling 2 million records with this kind of music makes no sense. I'm just going to shut up and sing and write my songs and ride the wave until it crashes." □

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